



Soul Matters

Nurturing Gratitude



RE Resources
Upper Elementary
November 2025

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Notes About Packet Design & Usage

To get the most out of our RE packets, we encourage users/leaders to periodically review the key components of our design and approach to our elementary age RE packets:

- **2025-26 Enhancements:** Read about all of the enhancements to this year’s packets by clicking [here](#).
- **Three Packets to Meet You Where You Are:** This year, 3 different packets come with your elementary RE subscription: One to support lower elementary programming, one to support upper elementary programming, and a third to support one-room schoolhouse RE models.
- **Theme Connection Support:** We are committed to experiential learning, so we don’t just suggest stories, games and hands-on activities; we also provide “Set It Up,” “Sum It Up,” and “Discuss It” components that help group leaders clearly explain how the story, game or activity illustrates or explores the session topic/focus.
- **Bullet Points for Longer Introductions:** Sometimes components of the packet require longer setup wording, such as the Wonderbox wording. When this is the case, we provide bulleted talking points. We do this because subscribers told us this was more user-friendly than a fully written-out suggested script. As the year proceeds, please let us know if this change is serving you well.
- **UU Values and Inspiring UUs in Every Packet:** To support UU identity formation, we weave our UU values and stories about inspiring UUs into each month’s packet. We’ve created two important tools to guide us, which also could be used by you if you want to create your own material: a chart that pairs [our monthly themes with the UU values](#) and a chart that pairs [our monthly themes with inspiring UUs](#).
- **User-Friendly, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale “Story Sheets”:** To save you time and support you as storytellers, our packets list the recommended wisdom tales and a bit about them, but then provide a hyperlink that takes you to a ready-to-tell and ready-to-print Google doc version of the story.
- **Leader Notes:** Throughout the packet, we offer tips and reminders to support and guide leaders. We identify these leader notes using *purple font and italics*.

Notes About Session Sections

Each of our session sections has been designed with care and intentionality. Below, we explain our approach to each session section with some suggestions about how to engage them.

- **Light It! - Chalice Lighting**

The chalice lightings we include in the packet are centered in our [UU core value of love](#), lift up the monthly themes, and tap into the power and fun of body movements. If you'd like an alternative chalice lighting, [HERE](#) is a document with other options.

- **Tell It! - Stories to Inspire Us**

Stories are a wonderful way to make our monthly themes come alive. Knowing that stories have a developmental component, we put picture book stories in our lower elementary packets, wisdom tales in our upper elementary packets, and a strategic selection of both in our one-room schoolhouse packets.

The stories we recommend can be used for Time For All Ages in a worship service to introduce that Sunday's session theme angle to the whole congregation, or they can be used within the RE space to help your children explore the session angle.

As [oral storytelling](#) is how religious traditions have long passed down wisdom and ensured those stories have the greatest impact, we encourage storytellers to memorize the wisdom tales and tell them from memory. Click [HERE](#) for some storytelling guidance.

- **Wonder Box - Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity**

The activities in the wonder box sections can be used at the beginning of a session to name and introduce that session's theme, or they can be used later in a session as an "[object lesson](#)" to explore the session theme in more depth.

- **Engage It! - Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning**

Our Engage It section offers a variety of experiential options for exploring each weekly session's theme angle. All of them are offered as "building blocks," meaning we don't intend for you to use them all, but instead we offer them to you as *optional* components to choose from to create your own unique experience/session. We suggest you choose **one or two** of these options that best fit the interests of your group and the time you have available.

- **Extinguish It!**

In each session, we offer chalice extinguishing words for you to bring your time to an end. We design these chalice extinguishers to echo the chalice lighting's call to love, as well as reiterate that session's takeaway and invitation to action. Like our suggested chalice lightings, these tap into the power and fun of body movements. If you'd like alternative chalice extinguishing words, [HERE](#) is a document with other options.

Welcome to Nurturing Gratitude

Hello Friends!

Welcome to the November Soul Matters RE Packet for Upper Elementary kids and our theme of Nurturing Gratitude

Fall is in full swing, and here on the East Coast, the leaves are turning, and the air is crisp! But regardless of where you are, November is the perfect time to notice all the little things that make life special. In Unitarian Universalism, we believe gratitude—saying thank you and noticing the good around us—helps us grow kinder hearts and stronger connections with each other.

This connection between gratitude and growth is central to our journey this month. Each session offers ways to explore what gratitude nurtures and makes possible in our lives, like a garden we tend with care and attention. We'll consider how gratitude nurtures our relationship with our ancestors, builds our connection to the ordinary blessings around us, helps hope and happiness flourish for us and others, more deeply roots us in kindness, and expands the many ways we can say thank you.

With that in mind, here are the five sessions included in this month's packet:

Session One: Gratitude & Ancestors - How Gratitude Helps Us Remember

Session Two: Gratitude & the Ordinary - How Gratitude Helps Us Notice Small Things

Session Three: Gratitude & Happiness - How Gratitude Gives Us Hope

Session Four: Gratitude & "Reciprocity" - How Gratitude Asks Us to Respond

Session Five: Gratitude & The Power of Thank You - How There Are Many Ways to Say Thank You

I'm especially excited about the thoughtful way this month's materials explore how gratitude nurtures us, beginning with remembering the gifts of our ancestors. As we do this, we'll have the opportunity to learn how other religious and cultural traditions also honor their ancestors. Additionally, rather than focusing on the Thanksgiving holiday, we lift up Indigenous Peoples' Month, exploring Indigenous wisdom and how gratitude nurtures us by inviting us to care for the Earth and understand the ways Indigenous communities think about thankfulness.

I also really enjoyed the opportunity this packet gave us to lift up our UU values of [Generosity](#), which calls us to "cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope" and [Interdependence](#)

Gratitude also invites us to remember two more inspiring UU ancestors: Poet Mary Oliver, whose poetry is woven fine with gratitude and has inspired so many UUs, and Rev. Galen Guengerich, a UU minister who put gratitude at the center of his theology and invites us to view it as a spiritual practice.

And last but not least, our monthly theme allows me to say how deeply grateful I am to be on this journey with you as we help our kids celebrate this great gift we call life!

April Rosario,

on behalf of the entire [Soul Matters Team](#)

Calendar Connections

November 2025

Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith

- [All Saints Day](#) (Christian) - Nov. 1 (more [here](#))
- [All Souls Day](#) - Nov. 2 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Samhain](#) (Pagan/Wiccan) - Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 (more [here](#))

Unitarian Universalist

- [James Luther Adams](#) birthday - Nov. 12 ([more](#))
- [Francis David](#) died in prison on Nov. 15 (1579) (more [here](#))

National Holidays & Cultural

- [Native American and Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Month](#) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- Alzheimer's Awareness Month
- [Día de Los Muertos](#)/Day of the Dead - Nov. 1-2
- James Weldon Johnson & J. Rosamond Johnson composed "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" - Nov. 6, 1900
- Birthday of [Dorothy Day](#) - Nov. 8 (1897)
- [Veterans Day](#) - Nov. 11
- [Remembrance Day](#) (Canada) - Nov. 11 (observed Nov. 12)
- Birthday of Elizabeth Cady Stanton - Nov. 12, 1815
- U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation on public buses was unconstitutional - Nov. 13, 1956
- [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#) - Nov. 20
- [National Day of Mourning](#) / [Thanksgiving Day](#) - Nov. 27, 2025
- [Origin of Species](#) published & [Evolution Day](#) - Nov. 24
- Black Panther Party [founded](#) - [Late Nov](#) (1966), exact day in Nov. varies among sources

For Fun and On the Fringe

- Sesame Street" first aired on PBS - Nov. 10, 1969
- World Kindness Day - Nov. 13
- Mickey Mouse's Birthday - Nov. 18, 1928
- International [Guinness World Records Day](#) - Nov. 19
- [Buy Nothing Day](#) - Nov. 29
- Charles Schulz Birthday - Nov. 26 (1922) (more [here](#) and [here](#) and on his [spirituality](#))

Session One: Gratitude & Ancestors

How Gratitude Helps Us Remember

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how we are nurtured by gratitude. This week, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors. As we do this, we will have the chance to explore the ways other religious and cultural traditions also express gratitude for ancestors.

Light It! Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

To be grateful for the gifts of our ancestors. (Invite kids to close their eyes like they are remembering and smile to signify happy memories)

Tell It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: The Memory Tree

Theme Connection

This story explores how gratitude for the gifts left behind by those who have died helps us heal the sadness of loss, and turns our memories into something that can keep giving comfort and joy for a long, long time.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tBlpi_hBT-jeKXqK0HjTL6lXmg3yvrOp8j52bIMt-V0/edit?usp=sharing

Wisdom Tale 2: Marlon Learns About Honoring Ancestors

Theme Connection

This story explores how, in many cultures, people believe that those who came before us are like the roots of a tree; even though we can't see them, they give us strength and help us grow.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XPikolYaZoczSOBWN-JUSQIFVzwwk6tvkVTklk92Kk/edit?usp=sharing>

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

A colorful paper or fabric cloth,
A candle (or battery-powered candle for safety),
A photo frame or picture of a loved one (real or symbolic),
A small bowl of water, A leaf or flower



Introduction & Reveal

If using the Wonderbox to introduce the session and the session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the Wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the Wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the Wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our Wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think the **objects** have to do with our monthly theme of Nurturing Gratitude.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Explain that today is about exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors.
 - Lift up that many cultures have special days in the fall when people remember those who have died. And for lots of them, part of the ritual is to create an altar.
 - Ask if anyone knows what an altar is.
 - Explain that it is a special place, often in a place of worship, where people can connect with their faith, offer prayers, and perform rituals.
 - Highlight that many cultures and faith traditions build altars as a way of connecting with those who have passed on, and that everything in the Wonderbox is things you might find on an altar. Each has a special meaning that helps us remember our ancestors.

- Lay out the cloth, and as you explain each thing, place it on the cloth:
 - This picture stands for someone special — a grandparent, friend, or ancestor.
 - Place the water - During Samhain, a Pagan and Wiccan festival that happens from October 31 to November 1, people honor the thinning of the veil between the living and the ancestors. Water is a symbol of life. Water reminds us that life flows from those who came before us.
 - Place the leaf or flower - On Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead (November 1–2), families in Mexico and many parts of Latin America build altars with marigolds and favorite foods to celebrate their ancestors. The bright flowers guide the spirits home and remind us to be grateful for their gifts.
 - Place the candle - On All Souls Day (November 2), people in many Christian traditions honor all those who have died, especially those they loved. They might visit cemeteries, attend special church services, and light candles. The light of this candle reminds us of the spirit and love that continues to shine in our hearts, even when someone is gone.
- Remembering our ancestors helps us feel connected and loved, even across time, and remember the gifts they have shared with us.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Remembrance Tree and Ritual

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Leader Note: The powerful part of this activity is the sight of a leafless and “lifeless” tree on the table in front of your youth. Then, as you begin your remembrance ritual, invite youth to take note of how, as they hang their “leaves,” the tree slowly takes on color and life, just as bringing the memories of our loved ones brings color and life into our lives.

Activity Prep

- Cut a bare tree branch large enough to mimic a tree when placed into the bucket. Create leaves from construction paper. For a **larger group**, use a **3–5-gallon bucket**, fill it with sand, and put it on a table or floor. For a **smaller group**, use a **#10 can** and a smaller branch and place it on a table.
- Gather and set out paper, crayons, markers, a hole punch, yarn/ribbon, and a container filled with sand and tea lights (real or battery-operated)
- Have reflective music playing during this activity. For instance, [Autumn Leaves](#), by Eva Cassidy.

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors. Our faith, Unitarian Universalism, does not have one set belief about what happens after death. However, our faith does tell us that love is at its center.

It also reminds us that, yes, people die, but love doesn’t. For instance, we have fond memories of loved ones in our hearts that make us smile and bring us comfort. We also sometimes feel like there are messages and voices in the “ear” of our hearts.

These are the memories of the gifts of our loved ones and pets who have died. And these memories can guide us, inspire us, and support us through the memory of who they were, how they lived, and how they loved. But we also acknowledge the pain and the hurt and all the change that comes from losing a loved one.

So we often create rituals and spiritual practices, like the one we are about to do, that allow us to remember those who are gone with gratitude and to help heal some of that pain and hurt.”

Directions

Step 1 - Leaf Rubbings

- Invite kids to go outside and choose a fallen leaf (if you don't have an outside space with leaves, collect a variety of them the week before and bring them into your space, and have kids choose from there)
- Next, using paper and crayons, invite kids to make leaf rubbings of the leaf/leaves that they choose.
 - Place a leaf with the bumpy side facing up on paper. You can tape the paper down to keep the leaf in place.
 - Peel the paper off the crayon a little to avoid getting in the way.
 - Turn the crayon on its side and color over the leaf. If the leaf isn't showing up, try pressing down harder with the crayon.
 - For more creative effects, you can use multiple colors, outline the leaf with a darker color, or cut out the leaf.
- Once the leaf rubbings are done, invite kids to write the name and a memory of someone they have lost on their leaf.
- Finally, have kids cut out their leaves, use the hole punch and make a small hole near the stem of the leaf, and tie a loop of yarn/ribbon through the hole, large enough that the loop can serve as a "hook" to hang the leaves on one of the tree branches.

Step Two - Remembrance Ritual

- Play some soft meditative music, invite kids to come up one at a time and light (or turn on) a candle, and share who their leaf was created for and a special memory they shared with them. Then, invite them to hang the leaf on the memory tree.
- Once everyone has hung their leaf and shared (if they are comfortable), finish with a short blessing:

We've hung our leaves on the Memory Tree.
The tree has taken on color and life,
just as the memories of our loved ones bring color and life into our lives.
Amen, Blessed be.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this ritual and its message that by remembering and giving thanks, we carry the gifts of our loved ones inside us."

Spiritual Practice: Circle of Life Meditation Walk

Leader Note 1: This activity requires access to outside space

This activity should take 15-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors. Around the world, many people set aside special times to remember their ancestors—the people and animals who came before them and helped shape their lives.

- In Mexico, during Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), families decorate altars with flowers, candles, photos, and favorite foods to remember loved ones.
- In China, during the Qingming Festival, people visit the graves of ancestors, clean them, and bring offerings.
- In Ghana and other parts of Africa, families have special festivals to honor ancestors with dance, music, and storytelling.
- In Pagan and Earth-centered faith traditions, people celebrate Samhain, a time when people honor the thinning of the veil between the living and the ancestors.
- In our UU faith, we believe that even when people and pets die, the love they gave us stays alive in our hearts. Gratitude—saying “thank you” in our hearts—helps us remember the gifts they gave us.

Today, we’ll take a special meditation walk to see how nature shows us the Circle of Life: birth, life, death, and renewal.”

Directions

- Remind kids that as they walk, they should
 - Stay with your buddy and the group.
 - Walk slowly—no running.
 - Use quiet voices so we can listen.
 - Respect all living things.
- Begin your walk in silence: For the first 5 minutes, walk without talking. Listen for nature’s sounds. Notice what you can see, hear, smell, and feel. Look for signs of birth, life, death, and renewal:
 - Birth: seeds, sprouts, baby plants
 - Life: birds, insects, trees, flowers
 - Death: fallen leaves, broken branches, dried plants
 - Renewal: moss, fungi, composting leaves turning into soil
- Invite kids to remember people or pets who have given them gifts, such as those who taught them something, made them laugh, or cared for them, and say “thank you” to them.
- Gather (if permitted) 1–3 natural objects that remind you of something your ancestors gave you (e.g., a strong branch for strength, a seed for hope).
- Bring the collected items back to your space or choose a spot in nature and place them all in the center to create an Ancestor Gratitude Circle.

Discuss It

- What is one gift you have received from an ancestor or loved one who has died?
- What’s one way you can carry that gift forward?
- Did you see anything in nature today that reminded you of that gift?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors.”

Game: What's Missing? – Ancestor Gifts Edition

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out small objects that could represent the kinds of gifts an ancestor might have given. These don't have to be literal heirlooms—just symbolic. *Examples: Wooden spoon (cooking, family recipes), Paintbrush (art, creativity), Seashell (vacation memories, love of nature), Small stuffed animal (comfort, love), Toy car (fun, playfulness), Book (stories, learning), Handkerchief (care, kindness), Seed packet (gardening, nurturing), Music note card or small instrument (songs, joy)*

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude helps us remember the gifts our ancestors have given us. To help us do that, we are going to play a memory game."

Directions

- Secretly arrange 6–10 of these items on a cloth, towel, or table in the middle of the group.
- Explain that each object represents something a person or pet we loved might have given us—like a skill, a tradition, a memory, or a feeling.
- Invite the group to look at the objects for 30 seconds and try to remember them.
- Have one child step out of the room (or close their eyes).
- Quietly rearrange and remove one object.
- The child returns, looks at the set of objects, and guesses which one is missing.
- Once they guess, ask them:
 - What might this object represent as a gift from an ancestor?
 - Who in your life might have given you something like this?
- Play until everyone has had a turn.

Leader Note: You can increase the challenge by adding more objects or removing two at a time.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message: just like our memory helps us notice when something is missing, gratitude helps us remember the people and pets we've loved and the gifts they gave us. Even when they're no longer here, those gifts remain a part of who we are."

Game: Memory Chain

This activity should take 5-10 minutes and is best done with at least 3+ children.

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to remember the gifts of our ancestors. To help us do that, we are going to play a game that helps us hold onto the people and pets we've loved and the special gifts they gave us—like stories, kindness, or songs."

Directions

- Have everyone sit in a circle.
- The first person begins by saying, "I have a loved one and I remember their gift of ____," They fill in the blank by naming something meaningful they've received from a loved one or ancestor (for example: a hug, a recipe, a story, a laugh, a song).
- The game continues around the circle to the left with the next person saying, "I have a loved one and I remember their gift of (names the first player's item), and a (adds a new gift to the list)."
- For example: "I have a loved one and I remember their gift of a hug, and a story, "
- Continue around the circle with each person repeating the full list and adding one more gift each turn.
- The game ends when someone can't remember all the gifts in order.

Leader Note: To make it more challenging, instead of going in order, the person who just spoke tosses a soft ball or beanbag to anyone else to take the next turn.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message that gratitude helps us keep the gifts from those we love in our hearts. Even if they aren't here now, their gifts stay with us and help us grow."

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember to be grateful for the gifts of our ancestors. (Invite kids to close their eyes like they are remembering and smile to signify happy memories)

Session Two: Gratitude & The Ordinary

How Gratitude Helps Us Notice Small Things

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how we are nurtured by gratitude. This week, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us to notice the small, but amazing, things in life. As we do that, we will have the chance to lift up the poet Mary Oliver, whose poetry is beloved by and has inspired so many UUs.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us to be grateful for the tiny things (pinch a small space with your fingers)

Tell It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: The Heron **(An Aesop Fable)**

Theme Connection

This story explores how we sometimes miss the gifts that life is trying to offer us because we are too focused on finding the biggest or best thing.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EhAA1RO-9NZR-Xm-kcXUs3Sn7ql1V0gwcTlfsnjD7Sw/edit?usp=sharing>

Wisdom Tale 2: The Teacher's Hand

Theme Connection

This story explores how we sometimes overlook the small, ordinary moments that others deeply value because we are focused on the big, obvious blessings we expect to see. It lifts up how gratitude grows when we pay attention to the quiet, everyday acts of care that can mean the most.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gC2s7UXolgLoTQzuvz_W3y9zyzLafW4wT8VCyGaK46Y/edit?usp=sharing

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

A magnifying glass and a [picture of Mary Oliver](#)



Introduction & Reveal

If using the Wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the Wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the Wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the Wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our Wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think the **objects** have to do with our monthly theme of **nurturing gratitude**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Hold up the magnifying glass and ask the group what it does (Let kids answer.)
 - Lift up that it helps us see the details we might miss — the tiny lines on a leaf, the sparkle in a rock, or the patterns on a shell.
 - Explain that gratitude is like a magnifying glass for our hearts. It helps us notice the small, beautiful things in life that we might have walked right past — and when we notice them, they can bring us joy.
 - Hold up the picture of Mary Oliver, introduce her as a poet whose words are beloved by and have inspired so many UUs, and then share a short excerpt from her poem, *Instructions for Living a Life*:

"Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."
 - Highlight that Mary Oliver spent her life noticing the ordinary, but amazing things of life — the color of a bird's feathers, the sound of the ocean, the way the morning light looked. Her poems remind us that paying attention is a way to notice how there is so much more in this world to be grateful for than we often think.
 - Explain that today is about exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us notice the small things in life, and how it reminds us that paying attention to the small details and moments helps us realize they are a gift.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Spiritual Practice: Chocolate Gratitude - Active Meditation

(Adapted for chocolate from Jon Kabat-Zinn's "Mindfully Eating a Raisin")

This activity should take 3-5 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out 1-2 chocolate (dark, milk, or white — **be mindful of allergies**; foil-wrapped minis work best) per child - plus a few extras in case of drops or "oops" moments.

Set It Up

"Last week, we talked about being grateful for our ancestors, and that was a big thing, but gratitude is not just about big things. It's also about tiny moments and small pleasures. So this week, we are talking about being grateful for small things. Today we're going to practice slowing down and really noticing something small and delicious, a piece of chocolate. You may have eaten chocolate a hundred times before, but this time we're going to pay such close attention that we discover new things about it. When we notice something fully, we can feel more grateful for it, and that helps us notice more good things in everyday life."

Meditation Script

Step 1: Look

- Hold your chocolate in your hand.
- Pretend you've never seen it before — like it's a treasure from another planet.
- Notice its shape, its color, and how the light reflects on it.
- If it's wrapped, notice the wrapper's colors and texture before unwrapping.

Step 2: Feel

- Roll it gently between your fingers.
- Is it hard or a little soft? Smooth or textured? Does it warm slightly in your hand?

Step 3: Listen

- If it's wrapped, listen to the sound of the wrapper opening
- If unwrapped, listen as you place it gently on a plate or in your palm

Step 4: Smell

- Hold it to your nose and take a slow, deep sniff.
- What do you notice? Is it sweet? Rich? Does it remind you of any memories or feelings?

Step 5: Taste

- Place the chocolate on your tongue but don't chew yet.
- Notice how it feels as it begins to melt.
- Take a slow bite, letting the taste spread in your mouth. What flavors can you detect? Sweetness? Bitterness? A hint of vanilla or caramel?
- Chew slowly, savoring until it's gone.

Discuss It

- What surprised you about the chocolate when you paid such close attention?
- How was this different from how you usually eat chocolate?
- How can slowing down to notice something make you feel more grateful for it?
- What other “small things” could you try noticing like this in your daily life?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that Gratitude can start with something as small as a single bite of chocolate. The more we notice the details, the more joy we can find in the little things — and life is full of little things worth noticing.”

Hands-On Activity: “Gratitude is Everywhere” – A Mary Oliver Mad Lib

This activity should take 10 - 15 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out pens and pencils and coloring supplies, print a [“Gratitude is Everywhere” – A Mary Oliver Mad Lib](#) for each person

Set It Up

“Mary Oliver was a poet who inspired many UUs. She loved to notice small things — the way a leaf moves in the wind, the sound of a bird’s song, the sparkle of morning light. She found joy in these little moments, and she believed that noticing them could change how we feel inside. That’s one way gratitude nurtures us. It reminds us to pay attention to the good things, especially the little ones.”

Directions

- Begin by explaining that this fill in the blank poem is inspired by Mary Oliver, who loved noticing small details in nature and life.
- Pass out the fill in the blanks and invite kids to create their own poems. Encourage specific, detailed answers instead of general ones to deepen reflection.
- Once everyone’s poem is finished invite kids to share and then hang them in your space

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that, just like Mary Oliver, we too can notice and be grateful for the small but amazing details of life.”

Hands-On Activity: Mary Oliver Gratitude Cards

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Print (on cardstock) a set of [Mary Oliver Gratitude Cards](#) for each child

Gather and set out coloring supplies, stickers (leaves, birds, feathers, flowers), and small envelopes

Set It Up

“Mary Oliver was a poet who inspired many UUs. She loved to notice small things — the way a leaf moves in the wind, the sound of a bird’s song, the sparkle of morning light. She found joy in these little moments, and she believed that noticing them could change how we feel inside. That’s one way gratitude nurtures us. It reminds us to pay attention to the good things, especially the little ones.”

Directions

- Pass out envelopes and a deck of [Mary Oliver Gratitude Cards](#) to each child and invite them to decorate the back side as well as their envelopes
- Encourage the kids to take them home and use them as part of their spiritual practice
 - Read one card each day as a reminder to notice small joys.
 - Add more cards at home when they notice new things to be grateful for.
 - Share the cards with a family member to spark a gratitude conversation.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that Mary Oliver once said, “Pay attention. Be amazed. Tell about it.” These cards are your way to pay attention and be grateful for the little things. Take them home, and let them help you see all the little things that make life beautiful.”

Game: Gratitude Pictionary

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and is best done with 4+

Activity Prep

Gather and set out a large drawing pad or whiteboard & markers (or paper for each team), Timer (phone or stopwatch), “Small Things Gratitude Prompt Cards”

Leader Note: You can also have everyone write down a couple of things they are grateful for on slips of paper. Fold them and put them in a bowl.

Small Things Gratitude Prompt Ideas

- A rainbow after rain
- A warm cookie
- A feather on the ground
- A hug from a friend
- A butterfly
- The smell of popcorn
- A bird singing
- A comfy blanket
- A seashell
- Freshly sharpened pencil
- A pair of cozy socks
- The sound of waves
- Ice cream cone
- Candlelight
- A cat purring
- Falling autumn leaves
- Marshmallows in hot chocolate

Set It Up

“Last week, we talked about being grateful for our ancestors, and that was a big thing; this week, we are talking about being grateful for small things. Today, we are exploring how we can be nurtured by gratitude when we are grateful for and notice the small things in life. To help us do that, we are going to play a game of Gratitude Pictionary!”

Directions

- Divide the group into teams (If you have fewer than 5 kids, have everyone work as one team)
- The first person draws a card and *silently* reads the prompt.
- They have a minute or two to **draw** (no letters, words, or numbers!) what was on the paper, so their team can guess the gratitude item.
- If the team guesses correctly before the time runs out, they earn 1 point.
- Switch to the next team and repeat.
- Keep playing until all cards are used or time is up.
- The team with the most points at the end wins — but everyone wins because they leave with more gratitude ideas!

Discuss It

- Which drawings made you think of something you’re grateful for?
- Did you notice any small things you hadn’t thought of before?
- How could you practice noticing more of these little joys in real life?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message to be grateful for and notice the small things in life.”

Game: Pick Up Sticks: Noticing the Small Things Gratitude Game

This activity should take 15-25 minutes and is best done with at least 2+ kids

Activity Prep

Gather and set out Pick Up Sticks game or multi-colored drinking straws

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how we can be nurtured by gratitude when we are grateful for and notice the small things in life. To help us do that, we are going to play a game."

Directions

- Begin by explaining that the goal of the game is to pick up the most sticks over the course of the game.
- Hold the sticks in one hand, like a bundle of dry spaghetti a few inches above a table or the floor. Then open your hand to release the stick, letting them fall freely. When all of the sticks have come to rest, you will be ready to begin playing!
- Take turns letting the youngest child go first and then moving clockwise around your group.
- On each child's turn, they must try to pick up a stick without touching or moving any of the other sticks. If they do or touch any of the other sticks, they must let go of their stick and stop their turn.
- Once a child has successfully picked up a stick without moving others, they must answer the prompt for that color. Encourage kids to share specific and small things — something they might not always think of, to practice noticing details.
- Every time someone successfully picks up a stick, they may try to pick up another stick. Keep picking up sticks until you move another stick and lose your turn. *You can set a time limit or a limit on the number of sticks that may be picked up per turn.*
- The game ends when all of the sticks have been picked up.
- Color- Assignments
Leader Note: As not every church will be using the same materials, leaders will need to assign prompts to the colors they are working with on their own.
 - Red: Name a tiny thing in nature you are grateful for (like a ladybug, a certain leaf shape, the sound of rain).
 - Blue: Name a small moment from today or this week you are grateful for.
 - Green: Name a small thing someone did for you that made a difference.
 - Yellow: Name a sound you are grateful for (like laughter, birdsong, or the click of a pen).
 - Black: Name a smell you are grateful for (like cookies baking, rain, or your pet's fur).
 - White: Name something you see every day but are glad is in your life.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message that gratitude nurtures us by helping us notice the small things in life and how important it is to pay attention to little details and everyday joys."

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember to be grateful for the tiny things (pinch a small space with your fingers)

Session Three: Gratitude & Happiness

How Gratitude Gives Us Hope

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how we are nurtured by gratitude. This week, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us shift our perspective, moving us from sadness to happiness. As we do that, we will have the chance to explore our [UU Value of Generosity](#), which calls us to “cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope”

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

That gratitude helps us turn our eyes from what is missing (turn your head like you're searching)

To the happiness that is already here. (point at where you're standing)

Tell It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: The Ungrateful Sparrow (A Taoist Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story explores how gratitude is a powerful mindset change; from the worries and troubles we often focus on to the many gifts and beautiful things we sometimes overlook.

In The Ungrateful Sparrow, the sparrow receives help, food, or opportunities, but fails to notice or appreciate them. As a result, the sparrow focuses on what is missing, leaving it unhappy or dissatisfied. By contrast, other animals in the story experience gratitude from focusing on what they have, which makes them joyful and generous in return.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1q17vK7q2co1LBROKF1EI7ZzTz7cp8xKWuGkm4tV0SMI/edit?usp=sharing>

Wisdom Tale 2: The Moon Cannot Be Stolen (A Zen Koan Story)

Leader Note: Read about koans at <https://tricycle.org/magazine/what-is-a-koan/>

Theme Connection

This story explores how gratitude helps us notice the good things we already have, even when life feels tricky or unfair. When we focus on these “already-received gifts,” our hearts feel happier. Gratitude helps us realize that life is always offering us gifts, no matter what we lose or have taken away.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sR3R5KvZzxWA-tEO6_i-HIga4m_sjDccUlhHdae67VI/edit?usp=sharing

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time: Donuts



Introduction & Reveal

If using the Wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the Wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the Wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the Wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our Wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think the **donut** has to do with our monthly theme of **nurturing gratitude**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Hold up the donut and ask what they notice about the donut (Children might mention the sprinkles, the shape, or the hole in the middle.)
 - Explain that today you're exploring how gratitude can change how we see the world.
 - Lift up that the hole in the donut can remind us of the things we don't have or the problems we face, and if we focus on the hole, we might feel sad, frustrated, or left out. But the rest of the donut — the soft, sweet part — is like all the good things we do have.
 - Highlight that when we choose to notice those things, gratitude can help our feelings shift from sadness to happiness.
 - Share with the group that while it is true that we can't always change a hard thing that's happening, but we can change what we're looking at.
 - When we practice gratitude — by noticing the good things — it's like turning our head toward the donut instead of staring at the hole.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Gratitude Kaleidoscopes

<https://www.darcyandbrian.com/fun-kaleidoscope-kids-craft/>

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out (per child), 1 clean cardboard tube (toilet paper or paper towel cut in half), transparent pony beads, sequins, and or tiny colored gems, thin clear plastic (can be scrap from packaging) or wax paper, hot glue, markers, stickers, washi tape, or colored paper for decorating, scissors, cardboard and aluminum foil (for lining the inside to reflect more light)

Leader Note: It may be helpful to make this craft ahead of time, so kids have a model.

Set It Up

"A kaleidoscope changes what you see just by twisting it; the shapes and colors rearrange into something new. Gratitude works the same way. Even if nothing "outside" changes, looking through a lens of gratitude lets us see the beauty, hope, and abundance that were already there."

Directions

- Begin by having kids decorate their tubes
- Trace the end of the paper towel tube on the scrap plastic or wax paper three times and cut out all three circles.
- Hot glue one circle on the bottom end of the paper towel tube.
- Drop your beads into the tube. Put enough to almost cover the plastic. Then place the second plastic circle inside the tube.
 - You will need to use a pencil or marker to push it down to the bottom and loosely cover the beads.
 - Do not push it snug up against them! If it is too tight, then the beads won't move around between the plastic discs.
- Next, cut three strips of cardboard that are 1 inch wide and almost as long as the tube you are using.
- Cover each strip with foil and glue them into a triangle shape, and place them inside the tube. The triangle piece should be pretty snug between the plastic ends. *This will create the kaleidoscope effect when the kids look inside!*
 - The triangle pieces need to be almost as long as the tube. I'd say just a little shorter to make sure the end cover goes on right.
- Finally, glue the last plastic circle on the open end of the paper towel tube. This will be the end they look through.
- Once they are done, hold your homemade kaleidoscope up to the light and turn to view!

Sum It Up

Ask: "When you look through your kaleidoscope, does the outside world change — or does the way you see it change?-- Just the way you see it! -- Let's remember this activity and its message that gratitude works the same way. Even if a situation doesn't change, when we look for what's good, beautiful, or hopeful, our view shifts — and that can move us from sadness to happiness."

Hands-On Activity: Donut Decorating & Gratitude Sharing

Leader Note: This activity is best paired with the wonder box.

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Leader Note: Please make sure to check with all parents and caregivers first about food allergies or sensitivities and provide ingredients accordingly

Gather and set out plates, butter knives, plain donuts, frosting, and sprinkles

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us shift our perspective, moving us from sadness to happiness. To help us do that, we are going to decorate some donuts! As we do, let's think about how we cannot always focus on the things we don't have or the problems we face, the "donut holes" of life, but instead find ways to be grateful for the rest of "life's donuts", the soft, sweet part, or in other words all the good things we do have."

Directions

- Give each child two plain donuts (one for themselves and one to share) and have them decorate it with frosting/sprinkles,
- As kids decorate their donuts and eat, invite them to think of three small things that make them happy right now and how they can remember those things the next time they feel sad — so gratitude can help shift their perspective.
- Then invite kids into a conversation using these prompts:
 - When have you focused on "the hole" — something missing — and it made you feel unhappy?
 - Can you think of a time when you remembered something good you already had, and it helped you feel better?
 - What are some "donuts" in your life right now — things that you are grateful for that bring you joy, even if they seem small?
 - How could paying attention to these good things help you be a happier, kinder person?

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this activity and its message that our UU value of generosity isn't only about giving things, it's also about giving your attention, care, and hope. When we are grateful, we naturally become more generous because we recognize the gifts in our lives and want to share them. Gratitude helps us see what we have and opens our hearts to give."

Game: Gratitude Flip Cup Challenge

This activity should take 10 - 20 minutes and needs at least 2 kids to play

Activity Prep

Gather and set out plastic cups (1 per player or team), pre-made “hole” cards (situations that could feel disappointing, example: “It’s raining on the day you wanted to go to the park”), and Blank “donut” cards

Donut Hole Card Scenarios

You dropped your ice cream on the ground.
It’s raining on the day you wanted to play outside.
Your best friend is out sick from school.
You forgot your lunch at home.
You didn’t get the seat you wanted on the bus.
Your team lost the game.
Your favorite shirt is in the laundry.
You have to wait in a really long line.
The internet is down.
You got the smaller cookie.
You spilled your drink.

You lost your place in the book you were reading.
Your pencil broke during a test.
Your sibling took the toy you were playing with.
You forgot to bring your homework.
It’s too cold to go swimming.
You didn’t get invited to a party.
Your drawing didn’t turn out the way you wanted.
You got the last turn in the game instead of going first.
You had to wake up earlier than you wanted.
Your favorite snack is all gone.

***Leader Note:** If you didn’t do the wonder box, say something like this to introduce this game:*

“When you look at a donut, what do you notice? Sprinkles? Shape? The hole in the middle?

That hole can remind us of the things we don’t have or the problems we face. If we stare at the hole, we might feel sad or frustrated. But the rest of the donut — the sweet, delicious part — is like all the good things we do have. Gratitude is like choosing to look at the donut instead of the hole. It can help our feelings shift from sadness to happiness. We can’t always change hard things, but we can change what we focus on.

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by helping us shift our perspective, moving us from sadness to happiness. To help us do that, we are going to play a game that helps us shift or, in this case, flip our perspective from sad to happy with the help of some gratitude.”

Directions

- Divide kids into two or more teams.
- Place a stack of “hole” cards face down on one end of the table. Place blank “donut” cards at the other.
- First player on each team draws a “hole” card from the stack (example: “It’s raining on the day you wanted to go to the park”).
- They quickly think of and call out something positive or something they can be grateful for regarding that situation (example: “We can play board games inside” or “The plants are getting water”).
- Once they shout out their gratitude, they must successfully flip their cups (symbolizing how gratitude can flip our perspective), grab a “donut” card, and then tag the next teammate.
- The next player repeats
- The team with the most donut cards at the end wins

Discuss It

- Was it easy or hard to think of something positive quickly?
- How does practicing this help us in real life when something doesn’t go our way?

Game: Gratitude Tic-Tac-Toe

This activity should take 10-15 minutes and is best done with 4+ kids

Activity Prep

Gather and set out painter's tape to make a 3x3 tic-tac-toe grid and two sets of large markers for claiming squares (e.g., scarves, beanbags, or laminated "X" and "O" symbols) — one color for each team

Create 9 large "flowers" (paper or cardstock) with 4–6 liftable petals each.

Under each petal: a short "gloomy" scenario written on a slip of paper (e.g., "It's raining during recess," "Your best friend is sick and can't come over," "The team lost the game")

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude can shift our perspective — helping us move from sadness or frustration to hope and happiness. To help us do that, we are going to play a Tic-Tac-Toe game where we take 'gloomy' situations and practice flipping them into 'blooming' ones by finding something to be grateful for.

This fun game reminds us that, for Unitarian Universalists, the value of generosity calls us to cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope — noticing the good that's already here and sharing it with others, even in challenging times."

Directions

- Arrange the 9 flowers in a 3x3 Tic-Tac-Toe grid, taping the petals lightly so they can be lifted and replaced.
- Divide kids into two teams (X's vs. O's).
- Place teams on opposite sides of the room, about 15–20 feet from the flower grid.
- On "Go!" one child from each team runs to the grid.
- They choose a flower and lift one petal to reveal the "gloomy" situation.
- The player must quickly say one thing to be grateful for or one positive perspective shift about that situation.
 - Example: Gloom: "It's raining during recess." Gratitude shift: "I'm glad we can play board games inside and be cozy."
- If they give a gratitude-based response, they place their team's marker (X or O) on that flower and run back to tag the next player.
- If they get stuck, teammates may shout suggestions — but it must be positive and related to gratitude, not just "I like rain."
- The first team to get three in a row wins that round.
- Play multiple rounds with new gloomy scenarios each time.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message that gratitude doesn't erase hard or sad things, but it helps us notice where and how we can be happy even in gloomy moments."

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember that gratitude helps us turn our eyes from what is missing (turn your head like you're searching)

To the happiness that is already here. (point at where you're standing)

Session Four: Gratitude & “Reciprocity”

How Gratitude Asks Us to Respond

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how we are nurtured by gratitude. This week, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by asking us to respond to our gratitude by taking care of the earth and being generous to others. As we do that, we will have the chance to lift up our [UU Value of Interdependence](#) as well as Indigenous Peoples' Month and explore what Indigenous wisdom has to say about gratitude.

WTC Tender Topic Note: Please know that both the terms, Native American Heritage Month and Indigenous Peoples' Month, are used to refer to the same observance in November. While "Native American Heritage Month" is the officially designated name in the United States, "Indigenous Peoples' Month" is also used and reflects a broader understanding that includes Indigenous people worldwide. The terms are often used interchangeably.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

To receive gifts with thankful hearts, (hands on heart)

And share our gifts with open hands (open hands in front of you)

Tell It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: Salmon Boy

(A Haida Tribe - Pacific Northwest Wisdom Story)

WTC Note: Authentic Representation - This story comes from the [Salmon Homecoming An Activity Book for Kids](#) and was created in partnership with [The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe](#)

Theme Connection

A traditional Haida tale where a boy shows ingratitude by neglecting to thank the salmon that are sacred to his people. This story shows how being grateful restores relationships and how Indigenous perspectives call us to care for the beings who care for us.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/11xr3ne58nM12w5Y8V0phg_IVQ1GKHsb1pcNXqbTBwmo/edit?usp=sharing

Wisdom Tale 2: The Seven Grandfathers

(A Potawatomi Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story explores how gratitude nurtures us by helping us notice the gifts in our lives, and how that gratitude asks us to respond with love, respect, and care for the Earth and each other.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qvnLUn7FIKMvZT-4MK06YA4NDkMhARz4rbr2RozSriM/edit?usp=sharing>

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time

A card with the word “**Reciprocity**” on it and a plant in a pot and water (or a picture of a tree/plant)



Introduction & Reveal

If using the Wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the Wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today’s unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the Wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the Wonderbox with something like, “And now let’s explore today’s topic some more by finding out what is in our Wonderbox.”
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think the word **Reciprocity**, the plant, and the water have to do with the theme of **Nurturing Gratitude**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Does anyone know what reciprocity means? **Reciprocity** means it is shared back and forth so that everyone is cared for and everyone benefits.
 - Hold up the plant and highlight how, when we breathe out carbon dioxide, the plant breathes it in. And when the plant breathes out oxygen, we breathe it in. That’s reciprocity—giving and receiving.”
 - Pour a little water into the plant. And explain that the Earth gives us gifts too, like water, food, and air. When we take care of the Earth, we are giving back. That is also reciprocity.
 - This week, we are lifting up Indigenous Peoples' Month and indigenous wisdom as we explore how we might think about gratitude. We are exploring how Indigenous wisdom often challenges us to see that gratitude and generosity are connected. If we are truly grateful, we will want to give back and contribute to the circle of giving and receiving.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Gratitude & Reciprocity Sculpture

Leader Note: This activity was inspired by [The Spirit of Reciprocity: A student project inspired by the writing of Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out multi color air-dry clay, or white air-dry clay, and painting supplies

Leader Note: If you do not have air dry clay or it is out of your budget this project can also be done by drawing a picture or making a collage that

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring gratitude and reciprocity and lifting up Indigenous Peoples' Month, and exploring how they think about gratitude.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, an Indigenous scientist and writer, reminds us that reciprocity means giving and receiving, or in other words, a circle of care. The Earth gives us gifts, and we give back by caring for the Earth. A question she asks in the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* is: "How can we remember that the Earth is a gift, and treat the world as sacred again?"

We are going to try to answer those questions today with an art project."

Directions

- Invite kids to begin by thinking of a spot in nature or a part of the Earth they care about or feel connected to. (It could be a favorite tree, a nearby park, a plant in your home, or even the birds, bugs, or animals they notice outside.)
- Then invite them to use the clay and sculpt something that represents their spot or item in nature as a way of bringing shape to their gratitude for that thing in the living world.
- Be sure to lift up that their art should help tell the story of your relationship with that part of nature.
- When they are done, invite them to share their sculpture and their Artist's Statement (this can be written or shared verbally)
 - Why did you choose this place, plant, or animal?
 - What story does it tell? How are you part of that story?
 - What gifts does it give you? How might you give back?
 - How can we listen to the Earth with our whole selves?

Hands-On Activity: Gratitude and Reciprocity through Song

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out a device to play the YouTube video: [From You I Receive](#)

Leader Note: YouTube Video by the Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Upton, Massachusetts, USA, used with their permission.

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring two big ideas: gratitude and reciprocity. Gratitude means noticing the gifts that life gives us every day, like a hug from someone we love, a good meal, or even the sunshine on our face. Reciprocity means giving back when we share kindness, care, and love with others in return.

What are some gifts you've noticed in your life this week?

What are some ways you've given back—to people, pets, nature, or your community?

One of our UU hymns reminds us of this beautiful cycle of gratitude and reciprocity. It's called 'From You I Receive.' The words are very simple but very powerful. Today, we are going to learn this song and the sign language that goes with it as a way of holding up how we are nurtured by gratitude."

Directions

- Play the YouTube video once straight through.
- Ask: "What did you notice about the song and the movements?"
- Teach the song line by line, introducing the sign language movements from the video.
- Repeat until the group can sing and sign together.
- Invite kids to stand in a circle.
- Each person names one gift they've noticed this week (gratitude).
- As a group, after each person shares, sing the first line together with signs: "From you I receive..."
- Then, go around again, this time with each person naming one way they can give back (reciprocity). Again, respond with the next line: "To you I give..."
- This creates a living, embodied version of the hymn!
- Finally, sing the whole hymn together two times through with signs.

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this activity and its message that when we practice gratitude, we notice life's gifts. When we practice reciprocity, we join in the circle of giving and receiving, and how this song is an example of how we are always connected through gratitude and giving."

Game: The Three Sisters Gratitude Toss

This activity should take 5-15 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out 6–9 beanbags/soft balls (can be color-coded to the sisters if you like) and three decorated or labeled targets or buckets to represent the Three Sisters:

- Corn = tall and strong (paint or tape a stalk of corn image on it).
- Beans = climbing and connecting (use green vines or string for decoration).
- Squash = wide and protecting (draw or tape on a squash or pumpkin).

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by asking us to respond to it by taking care of the earth and being generous to others. One of the ways we can do that is by honoring Indigenous Peoples’ wisdom, the gifts of the land. When we pay attention to these gifts, gratitude grows—and gratitude calls us to respond by caring for the land and being generous to others. This game is built on the wisdom of indigenous gardening techniques. Long ago, many Indigenous tribes cared for the land in ways that were sustainable and respectful, growing food in harmony with nature. “

Directions

Begin by asking if anyone has ever heard of The Three Sisters when it comes to planting?

- Explain that many Indigenous peoples across North America have planted three crops together for hundreds of years: corn, beans, and squash, and have called them the Three Sisters.
- Explain that they do this because
 - The corn grows tall, and the beans climb up the corn stalk.
 - The beans also put nitrogen back in the soil to feed the corn.
 - The squash grows wide, with big leaves that shade the ground, keeping it moist and keeping weeds away.
 - Each one helps the others thrive. They are stronger together than they could ever be alone."
- Lift up that this wisdom teaches us that gratitude is not just about saying thank you, it's about taking care of each other and the earth, so that everyone can grow and be nourished.
- Invite kids to line up with beanbags.
- Each round, kids toss beanbags into the Corn, Beans, or Squash targets.
- When a beanbag lands in a Sister, read or discuss its “gratitude lesson.”
- Example Gratitude Prompts:
 - Corn (Strength): What is something in your life that gives you strength? How can you show gratitude for it?
 - Beans (Connection): Who helps you grow by connecting with you? How can you give back to them?
 - Squash (Protection): What protects or cares for you? How can you protect and care for the earth or someone else?
- Kids take turns tossing until everyone has had 2–3 chances.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and the wisdom that comes from Indigenous peoples, and that Indigenous Peoples’ Month is a time to honor these traditions and voices. The Three Sisters remind us that gratitude isn’t just about noticing gifts; it also calls us to give back. Just as the corn, beans, and squash care for each other and for the people who plant them. We can practice gratitude by taking care of the earth and by being generous to others.”

Game: Web of Life Gratitude

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out index cards, markers, yarn, tape

Set It Up

"This month's theme is an opportunity to lift up our [UU Value of Interdependence](#) as we explore how gratitude nurtures us by asking us to respond to it by taking care of the earth and being generous to others. To help us do that, let's start with some brainstorming. Let's see if we can name 20 or more gifts from the earth we're grateful for. Think of big ones (like the ocean) and small ones (like earthworms). Think of things that feed us, protect us, bring beauty, or bring joy."

Directions

- Invite kids to brainstorm and write them down on the index cards as kids call them out. (Encourage them to get past the "easy" 5-10 answers and push for 20+).
- Lift up all these gifts that we as people receive every single day, and how gratitude helps us notice them.
- Hold up the yarn ball and remind the group that in Indigenous traditions, gratitude isn't just about noticing. It's also about responding to our gratitude by giving back and remembering that we are all connected in a web of life.
- Explain that for this game, their job is to work together and find a way to connect all the things they have just brainstormed
- Have kids spread the cards out around the room
- Gather kids in the center. One child walks over to a card they feel grateful for and says: "I am grateful for ___ because ___." Example: "I am grateful for bees because they pollinate our food."
- That child tapes the end of the yarn to bees and then stretches the yarn across the room to place it on another card that connects. Example: They put the yarn on the "Apples" card, because it's a food that bees pollinate.
- Another child picks up from there: "I am grateful for apples because they give me food." Then they connect apples to soil (where apple trees grow).
- The next child starts at soil "I am grateful for apples because...." Keep going! Each child adds gratitude words and stretches the yarn to connect cards.
- By the end, you'll have a giant web spread across the room linking bees, food, sun, water, people, etc.

Discuss It

- What do you notice about our web?
- What would happen if one part disappeared (like bees, water, or soil)?
- How does this help us think about gratitude and reciprocity?

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message that every gift of the earth is connected. Gratitude means noticing those gifts. Reciprocity means taking care of the earth and each other, so the [Interdependent](#) web stays strong. Indigenous peoples have taught this wisdom for generations, that we live in relationship with the earth, and gratitude calls us to give back."

Game: The Great Salmon Life Cycle Race

[From Salmon Homecoming An Activity Book for Kids](#)

Leader Note: This game should be alongside the Salmon Boy wisdom tale

**This activity should take 20-40 minutes and is played with 2-4 players
(If you have more than 4 kids, you can make multiple games.)**

Activity Prep

Print the game pieces and game board found on pages 8, 10, and 11 of Salmon Homecoming
<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-10/salmonhomecomingactivitybook.pdf>

Set It Up

Today, we are lifting up our UU Value of Interdependence as we explore how gratitude nurtures us by asking us to respond to it by taking care of the earth and being generous to others. This game is a way of honoring the wisdom we heard in the Salmon Boy story and learning more about what salmon mean to Indigenous People. Did you know:

- Salmon are part of the spiritual and cultural identity for some Indigenous People
- For some tribes, the longhouses and churches on their reservations and ceded areas rely on salmon for their religious services.
- The annual salmon return and its celebration by some Indigenous People assure the renewal and continuation of human and all other life.
- Historically, some Indigenous People were considered wealthy because of a flourishing trade economy based on salmon.
- Salmon and the rivers they use are part of some Indigenous Peoples' sense of place. It is believed that The Creator put where the salmon return. And so some Indigenous People feel they are obliged to remain and protect that place.
- Salmon are indicator species: as water becomes degraded and fish populations decline, so too will the elk, deer, roots, berries, and medicines that will sustain us.
- For some Indigenous Peoples, salmon has been the primary food source for thousands of years, and continues to be an essential aspect of their nutritional health.
- For some Indigenous Peoples, the annual return of the salmon allows the transfer of traditional values from generation to generation.
- Without salmon returning to our rivers and streams, some Indigenous Peoples believe they would cease to be. ~ [source](#)

Directions

- Cut out the fish game pieces on this page, one for each player. If you wish, color each one a different color. Place them at START.
- Cut out the numbers on this page. Turn these over, mix them up, and each player pick one of them. The player with the highest number starts first.
- Before each player's turn, mix up the numbers. The player then draws a number to see how many spaces they will move.
- The winner is the first player to reach his or her spawning grounds. An exact roll is not necessary to finish.

Discuss It

- What do you notice about our web?
- What would happen if one part disappeared (like bees, water, or soil)?
- How does this help us think about gratitude and reciprocity?

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember (tap the side of your head)

To receive gifts with thankful hearts, (hands on heart)

And share our gifts with open hands (open hands in front of you)

Session Five: Gratitude & The Power of Thank You

How There Are Many Ways to Say Thank You

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how we are nurtured by gratitude. This week, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by reminding us that there are many ways to express gratitude. As we do that, we will have the chance to lift up one of our inspiring UUs, Rev. Galen Guengerich, a minister who put gratitude at the center of his theology and invites us to view it as a spiritual practice.

Leader Background: Rev. Galen Guengerich, Ph.D., has served as a minister of All Souls since 1993, and as Senior Minister since 2009. He is the author of *The Way of Gratitude: A New Spirituality for Today* (2020) and *God Revised: How Religion Must Evolve in a Scientific Age* (2013). He studied classics at Franklin and Marshall College, received his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and went on to earn a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Chicago. Find more information on Rev. Galen Guengerich and the theology of gratitude [Here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)

Light It!

UU Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)
Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)
As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)
May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)
Remind us there are many ways to say thank you (say [thank you in ASL](#))

Tell It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: Thankful Dogs

(A UU Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story explores how gratitude can be spoken in many ways: in words, in songs, in actions, and in kindness. Saying thank you doesn't just make us feel good; it connects us more deeply to each other and to the whole wide world.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11GXspOv0hUiOVq47I4S6w6FNnlRT13YFnAwj1PRGZEO/edit?usp=sharing>

Wisdom Tale 2: The Dove and the Ant

(An Aesop's Fables from Ancient Greece)

Theme Connection

This story explores how saying thank you can make our hearts bigger and our connections stronger. Gratitude isn't just about words; it can also be shown in kind actions and caring for one another.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zlZTONQORNrvAO3hR6gBTuliv-N9G_C2bEIMROTfk8/edit?usp=sharing

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time: A Chalice



Introduction & Reveal

If using the Wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the Wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the Wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the Wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our Wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think the **chalice** has to do with our monthly theme of **nurturing gratitude**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - **Ask** if anyone knows why UUs light chalices?
 - Explain that in UU communities, we light a chalice at the beginning of our time together to remind us that this is a sacred time, a special space, and that we are connected.
 - **Ask** what other things you do to help you feel calm, focused, or connected?
(deep breaths, hugs, bedtime stories, meditation, prayer, art, singing)
 - Lift up that lighting the chalice is like that for UUs. It helps us center ourselves and remember what matters. It's one of the spiritual practices we share as a community. For many UUs, lighting the chalice is a spiritual practice, something we do again and again to connect to what matters most.
 - **Ask** if anyone knows what a spiritual practice is?"
 - Explain that spiritual practice is something you do again and again that helps you feel connected—to yourself, to other people, to the world, or to something bigger. It could be meditation, walking in nature, journaling, art, prayer, or lighting candles."

- Lift up Rev. Galen Guengerich, one of our inspiring UUs.
 - Explain that he is a Unitarian Universalist minister who says that saying thank you is a spiritual practice.
 - In Unitarian Universalism, we believe that gratitude is more than just a nice feeling...it's a spiritual practice.
 - Rev. Galen Guengerich, a UU minister, teaches that saying thank you is a way to connect with the sacred.
 - He teaches that when we notice all the gifts in our lives—like sunshine, friendship, food, family—we feel grateful. And when we feel grateful, we are called to give back. Gratitude isn't just a feeling—it's a way of living, and a way of connecting to the world.
 - It's not enough to only feel thankful inside. Gratitude grows stronger when we express it. Think about the different ways: Sometimes we feel gratitude quietly in our hearts. Sometimes we say thank you out loud. Sometimes we show gratitude by writing a thank-you card, making art, or doing something kind in return.
 - Each of these is a way to live our UU values.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Gratitude Chalice Lightings

This activity should take 30-60 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out for each child terra cotta pots and bases, egg cups (be sure they fit a tea light), or clear plastic goblets and an LED tea light, as well as paint supplies.

Print several Chalice Lighting Fill-in-the-blank starter

We light this chalice for _____, To remind us to _____, And to bring _____ into our hearts

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by reminding us that there are many ways to express gratitude and lifting up one of our inspiring UUs, Rev. Galen Guengerich, a minister who put gratitude at the center of his theology and invites us to view it as a spiritual practice.

Leader Note: If you did not use the wonder box, introduce Rev. Galen Guengerich here.

There's a Unitarian Universalist minister named Rev. Galen Guengerich who says that one of the most important spiritual practices for us is gratitude. He teaches that when we practice gratitude, we start to notice all the gifts around us—sunlight, water, food, family, friends—and then we feel called to give back. Gratitude connects us to each other and to the earth. It reminds us to be generous and to take care of the world.

To help us do that, we are going to connect gratitude with our core UU spiritual practice: lighting the chalice. We will create our own chalices and write our own chalice lighting words, inspired by gratitude."

Directions

Make the Chalice & Discuss it While they Paint (15-30 min)

- Invite kids to paint their terra cotta pots, egg cups, or wine glass chalices, encourage creativity—there's no one way to make a chalice.
- Play calming music in the background as they paint
- Explain that chalice lighting usually has three parts:
 - Welcome or Purpose – Why we're lighting it, who we are, and why we are gathering.
 - A meaning or mood - what we hope, feel, or want to remember - What the light represents: hope, love, justice, etc.

- A blessing or closing - a hope, wish, or reminder

Example:

- We light this chalice for love and learning, to help us feel for peace, and to remind us to be kind today.
- We light this chalice in gratitude for the trees, so that we may remember to care for the earth and share kindness with the world.
- We light this chalice in gratitude for friendship, in gratitude for those we play with, so that we may remember we are never alone, and share love with the world.
- Make a group word web or list for each of the following:
 - Feelings we might bring to the chalice (joy, sadness, hope, curiosity...)
 - Values we care about (love, fairness, truth, helping...)
 - Things we do together as UUs (sing, learn, help, listen...)

Writing Their Own (20 minutes)

- Invite them to write their own short chalice lighting using the 3-part model. They can write their own or use the Fill-in-the-blank starter
We light this chalice for _____,
To remind us to _____,
And to bring _____ into our hearts
- Finally, invite kids to gather in a circle and one at a time place their chalice in the center or hold it up (if it is dry). Read their chalice lighting words aloud and turn on their tea light.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and how Rev. Guengerich reminds us that saying thank you is a spiritual practice. May we keep practicing gratitude every day, so that our lives shine brighter with kindness and love.”

Hands-On Activity: UU Gratitude Beads Practice

This activity should take 15-25 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out key chain loops, different colored strings, and lots of different styles and sizes of beads.

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how in Unitarian Universalism, we believe that gratitude is more than just a nice feeling—it's a spiritual practice. Spiritual practices help us connect with ourselves, with other people, with the earth, and with something bigger than us.

Rev. Galen Guengerich, a UU minister, teaches that saying thank you is a way to connect with the sacred. It's not enough to only feel thankful inside. Gratitude grows stronger when we express it.

It's not just enough to feel gratitude—we need to express it. When we say thank you, or show it in a card, or even carry a reminder with us, it changes us and makes the world kinder. Today, we are going to make Gratitude Beads to help us practice saying thank you

To help us do that, we are going to make **Gratitude Beads** to help us practice expressing gratitude."

Directions

- Invite kids to choose a piece of string, 2 large bead, 7- 10 other beads
- Have kids begin by tying their string to their keychain loop or then thread on their large bead
 - As they do say something like: "This is your anchor bead - it is how you start your spiritual practice and reminds us to pause, breathe, and prepare to practice gratitude by saying thank you."
- Next, invite kids to string on their other beads, their Gratitude Beads
 - As they add each bead, invite them to name something they're thankful for: "I am thankful for clean water.", "I am thankful for my family.", "I am thankful for the trees."
- Finally, have them string on their last large bead and explain that this is their closing bead
 - As they do say something like: "This bead reminds us to not just feel thankful but to say it out loud or show it. For example, I might write a thank-you card, or say thank you to a friend, or whisper thank you to the earth. It represents how they want to carry gratitude forward (peace, joy, love, kindness)."
- Have them finish by tying it into a knot at the end.
- Close by leading kids through a Gratitude Bead Meditation
 - Invite the children to sit quietly with their beads in their hands. Speak slowly, with pauses:
"Take a deep breath in ... and let it out slowly. Feel your Gratitude Beads in your hand. These beads are here to help you practice saying thank you.

Touch your big bead. This is your reminder to pause. Take another deep breath in ... and out. Get ready to say thank you.

Now move to the next bead. Think of one thing you are thankful for. Say it in your mind, or whisper it out loud: Thank you for ... [pause]

Move to the next bead ... say another thank you something else

Keep going, bead by bead, until you have named all your thank-yous.

Touch your last bead. This one reminds you to carry gratitude with you all day. Take one more deep breath in ... and out ... and say one last thank you—for anything you choose."

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this activity and its message that gratitude grows stronger when we express it."

Game: Gratitude Charades: Many Ways to Say Thank You

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and needs at least 2 kids, but is best with 4+

Activity Prep

Gather and set out a small bowl or basket, and create slips of paper with different thank-you actions written.

Examples: Giving a hug, High five, Waving, Writing a thank-you card, Bowing, Sending flowers, Making a meal, Saying “thank you” out loud, Smiling warmly, Doing a kind deed (like helping carry something), etc.

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring how there are so many ways to say thank you! Sometimes we use words, sometimes actions, sometimes gifts. Today we’re going to play a game that helps us practice them.”

Directions

- Invite kids to form two teams (or play all together in a small group).
- The first person from Team A picks a slip and silently acts it out (no words, just gestures).
- Their team has 30 seconds to guess the thank-you action.
- If they guess correctly, they earn a point.
- If not, the other team gets one chance to “steal” the point.
- Rotate turns between teams.
- Continue until all slips are used (or set a time limit).

Discuss It

- Which thank-you actions were easiest to guess? Which were hardest?
- Which ones do you use the most in your life?
- Which one could you try this week as a new gratitude practice?
- How does showing thanks in different ways connect us to one another?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message that gratitude nurtures us by reminding us that there are many ways to express it and say thank you.”

Game: Tapple - ABC's of Gratitude Edition

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and works best with 2-8 kids

Activity Prep

The game [tapple](#) or index cards each with a letter of the Alphabet on it

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures. To help us do that, we are going to play a game about."

Directions

- Begin by picking a category of things people may be thankful for (like "things in nature I'm thankful for," "people who help me," "ways I feel cared for").
- The first player names something they're thankful for that begins with a letter on the board.
- The next player must quickly name something different, starting with a letter that hasn't been used yet.
- Keep going around the circle. If someone can't think of something in time, they're out for that round.
- Play continues until all letters are used or everyone but one is out.
- For fun, end each round with the group shouting together: "Thank you!"

Discuss It

- How did it feel to think of so many things you're thankful for?
- Did you notice how gratitude can be big things or little things?
- How do we 'say thank you' in ways other than words?

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its message that when we take time to notice those efforts, we feel gratitude. And gratitude isn't just something we feel, it's something we share. Just like passing the ball took teamwork, passing on a 'thank you' keeps the connection going."

Game: The Thank You Relay

This activity should take 10 - 15 minutes and needs at least 4 kids to play

Activity Prep

Gather and set out 4 brooms (2 per team) and 1 small rubber ball per team (racquetball-sized is good)

Set It Up

"Today, we are exploring how gratitude nurtures us by reminding us that there are many ways to express gratitude and the power of a "Thank You". To help us do that, we are going to play a game about teamwork and gratitude. Gratitude is kind of like teamwork—it connects people together. When we say, 'thank you,' we're noticing someone else's effort and keeping the connection alive. Just like in life, you'll see that it takes cooperation, patience, and paying attention to each other for things to go smoothly. And just like gratitude, the more we practice, the easier it gets!"

Directions

- Divide kids into two even teams.
- Have teams form single-file lines with about 6 feet between each player.
- The last two people in each team line step out to the sides.
- Give each of them a broom, and place the ball at the feet of one of them.
- The broom-holder with the ball starts by sweeping the ball in a zig-zag pattern between the legs of their teammates until they reach the other broom-holder at the end of the line.
- That person sweeps the ball back in the same zig-zag pattern until they return to the beginning.
- At the starting line, the broom and ball are passed to the next two teammates.
- The process repeats until everyone on the team has had a turn.
- First team to finish wins!

UU Gratitude Framing

“That was a game of teamwork, patience, and concentration. Did you notice how much effort it took to get the ball through the zig-zag without it rolling away?”

This is kind of like life. Lots of people around us, parents, teachers, friends, people who clean our schools and churches, farmers who grow our food, are all working together in ways we sometimes don’t even see, so that life ‘rolls smoothly’ for us.

Discuss It

- What did it feel like when it was your turn to help your team?
- What happens if someone in the line didn’t pay attention or didn’t care?
- How is this like the ways people help us every day (at home, church, school, in the wider world)?
- What are some different ways—besides words—that you can say “thank you” to someone who helps you? (hug, high five, card, art, helping back, prayer, etc.)

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message that when we take time to notice those efforts, we feel gratitude. And gratitude isn’t just something we feel, it’s something we share. Just like passing the ball took teamwork, passing on a ‘thank you’ keeps the connection going.”

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember that there are many ways to say thank you (say [thank you in ASL](#))

November Packet Stories At-a-Glance

To support leaders as they assemble a session that best fits their children's developmental needs, this section provides an overview of all the wisdom tales and storybooks in our RE packets each month.

Wisdom Tales (from the upper elementary packet)

- [The Memory Tree](#)
- [Marlon Learns About Honoring Ancestors](#)
- [The Heron](#)
- [The Teacher's Hand](#)
- [The Ungrateful Sparrow](#)
- [The Moon Cannot Be Stolen](#)
- [Salmon Boy](#)
- [The Seven Grandfathers](#)
- [Thankful Dogs](#)
- [The Dove and the Ant](#)

Story Books (from the lower elementary packet)

- **Badger's Parting Gifts** by Susan Varley
- **Always Remember** by CeCe Meng
- **Finding Grateful** by Dianne White
- **Gracias/Thanks** by Pat Mora
- **Tiny Perfect Things** by M. H. Clark
- **Gratitude is My Superpower** by Alicia Ortego
- **Thank You, Omu!** by Oge Mora
- **We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga** by Traci Sorell
- **Bud Finds Her Gift** by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- **The Thank You Book** by Danna Smith
- **The Thank You Book** by Mo Willems

Story Books (from the one room schoolhouse packet)

- **The Secret of Saying Thanks** by Douglas Wood
- **Berenstain Bears Count Their Blessings** by Stan and Jan Berenstain
- **Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message** by Chief Jake Swamp
- **Sincerely, Emerson: A Girl, Her Letter, and the Helpers All Around Us** by Emerson Weber

Soul Work Table Activities

Many congregations have a multi-sensory table in the sanctuary to support children, youth, and adults who find it easier to focus when their hands are busy. Some of our Christian cousins call it a “Prayground.” Read about how they approach it [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). In UU circles, the tables are often for all ages, meaning adults are invited to use it too. We love calling it “Soul Work Table,” but of course, feel free to give it whatever creative name you want.

- [Nurturing Gratitude Coloring Sheet](#)
- We also suggest using some of the creative activities from this packet and any other manipulatives you choose on your soul works table.

RE Companion Resources

2025 - 2026 Chalice Chapel Songbook

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qgnKOouVChrXydvCBz9laRCizCOKTHLc/view?usp=sharing>

This song book offers kid-friendly hymns that align with each of this year's spiritual theme for each month. This resource was created and generously shared with permission by DRE Dana Lundquist and RE volunteer Chris Wise from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh

- Sept Building Belonging - 1021 Lean on Me
- Oct Cultivating Compassion - #1031 May we be filled with loving kindness
- Nov Nurturing Gratitude - #402 From You I Receive
- Dec Choosing Hope - #1022 Open the Window
- Jan Practicing Resistance - # 1017 Building a New Way
- Feb Embodying Resilience - # 389 Gathered Here
- Mar Paying Attention - #1007 There's a River Flowing My Soul
- Apr Embracing Possibility - #1024 When the Spirit Says Do
- May Awakening Curiosity - #1003 Where Do We Come From?

Feeding Our Spirit: Exploring Our UU Values through Fun in the Kitchen

https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/store/p945/RE_Summer_Feeding_Our_Spirit.html

Unitarian Universalism calls us to live our values with creativity, experimentation, and joy. And what better way to explore those values than through cooking, conversation, and community? This additional companion resource explores and highlights our UU values in a fresh and delicious way: through the joys and creativity of cooking! Each session centers on one of our new UU values and is paired with an introduction, story options, thoughtful discussion prompts, and three hands-on recipes. It gives people of every generation a chance to engage with their faith actively: to examine it, try it on, turn it over, take it apart, and rebuild it again and again. Perfect for Sunday mornings, midweek gatherings, or evening programs, this curriculum builds UU identity, fosters connection, and creates sweet memories. Whether in the kitchen at home, in a classroom, or in a church fellowship hall, these recipes help kids and adults alike practice gratitude, curiosity, generosity, and hope—while mixing, baking, and sharing food together.

While each recipe is aligned with one of our UU values, here is how we propose also aligning with our monthly themes:

September: Building Belonging

- Love - Chocolate Chip Mug Cake (simple comfort food to share)
- Interdependence - Bagels (every topping adds to belonging, just like people!)

October: Cultivating Compassion

- Love - Cinnamon Rolls (warm, shareable comfort food)
- Justice - Chicken Noodle Soup (classic symbol of caring for others when they're sick)

November: Nurturing Gratitude

- Generosity - Hot Chocolate Mix (easy to give away as thank-you gifts)
- Justice - Caprese Salad Stacks (appreciating seasonal foods, gratitude for the earth's gifts)

December: Choosing Hope

- Pluralism - Rainbow Pasta Salad (many colors, many people—hope in diversity)
- Transformation - Homemade Ice Cream (magic + joy = hope)

January: Practicing Resistance

- Equity - Deep Dish Mug Pizza (resisting “fast food only” culture, making your own)
- Justice - Soft Pretzels (twisted like arms linked in solidarity!)

February: Embodying Resilience

- Transformation - Carrot Pineapple Muffins (taking rough carrots, turning into something sweet)
- Generosity - Sugar Scrub Gift (self-care + care for others = resilience)

March: Paying Attention

- Pluralism - Elephant Toothpaste (a big, messy, surprising experiment that makes us notice!)
- Love - Pudding Pops (slow down, savor, pay attention to small joys)

April: Embracing Possibility

- Interdependence - Rock Candy (waiting patiently to see crystals form = possibility)
- Transformation - Painted Toast (ordinary bread becomes art = endless possibilities)

May: Awakening Curiosity

- Pluralism - Mug Jelly Doughnuts (curious surprise inside!)
- Equity - Taco Bar (so many ways to build your own = curiosity in choice)

June: Flourishing Together

- Equity - Fruit and Yogurt Parfaits (layered together = flourishing community)
- Generosity - Baked Nutella French Toast (big, celebratory dish to share)

Other Resources and Sources of Support

RE Leader Facebook Page

Don't forget about our RE Leader Support Facebook page. Here is where our colleagues post bulletin board pictures, share books, and ideas. It's a great ongoing source of support. Your colleagues are available to support you at the click of a button and with the ease of a post: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/545202255591601/>

Inspiration Facebook Page

Offer your teachers and parents spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page. Use the memes for your congregational FB page, as well: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Soul Matters Music Playlists

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else. Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month. Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

Soulful Home Family Guides

Invite your parents to explore the themes at home with their family by subscribing to our monthly parent guides, **Soulful Home**. Here's the link to the Soulful Home page on our website: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>

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Thanks to all the Soul Matters Religious Educators who send in suggestions for our monthly packets! Whenever you have stories, games, or activities you'd like to suggest, just email April at soulmattersre@gmail.com



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